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ARTS & LIFE

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For dedicated recyclers, what's been trashed can be treasure, D8

The Coup de coeur francophone kicks off today with 350 artists performing in 75 shows over 11 days, where the emphasis is on stretching the international boundaries of music

COURTESY COUP DE COEUR FRANCOPHONE

Belgian singer Karin Clerq is among several young standouts featured at this year's festival, making her local debut with icon Ariane Moffatt.

Moving beyond borders

JUAN RODRIGUEZ
SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE

The way Coup de coeur francophone founder Alain Chartrand explains it, the spiky festival's slogan, "Pour une chanson qui déménage," has multiple meanings. It's about songs that "move," both in the voluminous rock sense and in an emotionally moving way, and also music that moves across borders.

To illustrate his point – on the eve of the 11-day festival embracing 350 artists in 75 shows on nine stages across Montreal – he invited tango master Romulo Larrea to explain why he set classic Québécois songs within tango arrangements. The Larrea ensemble's new CD, Tango du coeur, with songs from Félix Leclerc to Daniel Bélanger, receives its concert premiere at the Coup fest this Saturday at La Maison de la culture Frontenac.

"The album reflects my musical roots, but also my life in Montreal," Larrea said. "Pauline Julien's major song L'Étranger has a line that says, 'We are always a stranger to somebody,' which touched me deeply. The greatest voyage is a dream, not only a dream that Claude Gauthier sings for the Quebec nation, but also a universal dream," added Larrea, who spoke no French when he decided to move to Quebec in 1975, but felt it was a place of hope, growth and peace compared with life in then violent and repressive Argentina.

Larrea eventually formed the first tango troupes in his adopted city, starting in 1980. Choosing songs from Quebec that fit tango forms like velvet gloves proved to be the biggest challenge because "the repertoire is so rich here." The smoky romantic tango, slow milongas and waltz structures are dominant, but the main aim was to "respect the composers' intentions and feelings while giving them new colours."

That, says the festival's Chartrand, is what makes the Coup de coeur's programming different: the accent on creation and unique musical events.

"Often, artists and composers don't realize how their songs can travel through other styles that aren't necessarily associated with the singer and open doors to other audiences. Maybe it takes the soul of tango to make people see their songs in a different way."

Please see COEUR, page D3

FRANCOPHONE MUSIC JUAN RODRIGUEZ

Roasting of Desjardins was crude and apt

Considering what ADISQ does for Quebec music industry, singer should have shown up

At water-coolers, bistros and taverns across Quebec they're still talking about comedian Guy A. Lepage's vitriolic attacks against singer-songwriter Richard Desjardins's no-show at the ADISQ music awards gala last Sunday night.

Desjardins, the poetic social activist who won a leading three Félix awards, was in the Gaspé on the off night of a tour and watched the ceremonies at a local watering hole.

What he saw did not amuse him, particularly the clip of gala host Lepage tossing one of Desjardins's prizes backstage.

Lepage's fury seemed to gather momentum throughout the evening.

After Desjardins won his first Félix, for best show, he said desultorily, as if reading the phone book: "Richard Desjardins isn't here. He's in the Gaspésie, on tour. I accept this on his behalf, and" – without pausing – "we'll be back in three minutes."

Desjardins's excuse was that it was his only night off in a stretch of six shows in seven nights. "Me, I traveled all night from Thailand to get to a show here," quipped Lepage later on. "No, I can't respect that!"

Desjardins, whose own label Foukinic is a member of ADISQ, had proposed a remote TV hook-up, but the industry association wanted him live.

At the end, holding a photo of Desjardins's head on a stick, Lepage was mock contrite.

"First, you're an excellent composer, and that's why I was pissed off at you for not being here. Do you accept your award? (nods) Are you happy to have it? (nods) Will you forgive me? (Non!)."

Please see ADISQ, page D3

Sleepless until it's settled

BILL BROWNSTEIN
ON U.S. ELECTION COVERAGE

"7:03 p.m. - CNN: Ted Kennedy ... predicts stunning victory for Kerry."

In the interests of science, culture and politics, Bill Brownstein undertook a crude experiment – to forgo sleep and catch the U.S. election results on television from start to finish. The experiment lasted 20 hours and 16 minutes.

7:01 p.m., Tuesday – CNN: Polls have closed somewhere, perhaps Indiana. Pravda (what Republicans call CNN) shows off endless wall of maps. And bloomin' Commie Wolf Blitzer, best mo-notone in show biz news, gets us pumped. Sort of. Introduces Judy Woodruff, parked in Election Analysis Centre. No word on whereabouts of Dr. Freud.

7:03 p.m. – CNN: Ted Kennedy, buoyed by positive exit polls and gosh knows what else, predicts stunning victory for Kerry.

7:17 p.m. – NBC: Tom Brokaw boasts of nifty electoral map on Rockefeller Centre skating rink. Is that unemployed Eric Lindros filling in the map with Republican red and Democrat blue?

7:35 p.m. – CBC Newsworld: Neil Macdonald speaks of exit poll results in ... "blogosphere" trending toward Kerry. Dynamic anchor Don Newman drives me to first martini of evening.

7:54 – CNN: Robert Novak, Crossfire's Republican apologist, appears to be conceding defeat for his team. Even his sidekick, that bow-tied mother Tucker Carlson, is downtrodden. Demonic lefty James Carville appears to be chortling.

8:01 p.m. – CBS: Dour Dan Rather suggests Florida is still too close to call. Duh. Polls closed a minute ago. Dour Dan drives me to second martini of evening.

8:03 p.m. – CBS: Dour Dan says Bush surge in South is akin to "a big wheel plowing through a Delta cornfield." Either that or I'm already hallucinating.

8:11 p.m. – Fox: An excitable Shep Smith reports on inappropriate voting conduct in Florida. "It's déjà vu all over again," Ah!

8:18 p.m. – ABC: A reassured Peter Jennings speaks of conflicting numbers. Ted Koppel speaks of the optimism emanating from Kerry camp. Kerry feels energized, though not enough to change that hunting jacket he's been sporting the last month.

8:23 p.m. – CBS: Dour Dan looks downright funereal and swiftly drives me to martini No. 3 of night. Lighten up, dude.

8:30 p.m. – Fox: Newt "Chuckles" Gingrich is feeling more positive about the Bush gang.

8:34 p.m. – ABC: Ubiquitous Republican poster-boy Rudy Giuliani is bullish about Bush prospects. Anchor Jennings seeks to strike a note of caution. It all comes down to O-hi-o and, of course, Flo-rida.

8:49 p.m. – CBS: Dour Dan digs really deep into his weathered manual of election clichés: "Only votes talk. Everything else walks." You go, Dour Dan.

8:58 p.m. – Fox: Young buck Shep (it's all relative) doesn't trust exit polls trending to Kerry.

9:02 p.m. – CNN: Wolf Blitzer is near apoplectic – for him – as he announces electoral college projections putting Bush in lead.

Please see BROWNSTEIN, Page D4

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